DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 443 CG 005 560

AUTHOR Ballesteros, David
TITLE Counseling Needs of Spanish Speaking Americans.
PUB DATE 24 Mar 70
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (New Orleans, Louisiana, March, 1970); Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Biculturalism; *Counseling Services; Cubans; *Cultural Isolation; Majority Attitudes; Mexican Americans; *Minority Groups; Puerto Ricans; *Spanish Americans; State of the Art Reviews; *Student Needs; Student Testing

ABSTRACT

The author feels there is a lack of insight and sensitivity in regard to understanding individual learning and behavioral patterns of Spanish-speaking students. The "Anglo Point-of-View-Problem" is the real problem in our society, hampering racial, cultural and language values. School personnel should foster pride in the origin, history, cultural and bilingual background of Spanish-speaking Americans, rather than consider them liabilities. Counseling and guidance should include cultural counseling and encouragement to contribute to the Hispanic students' search for self and development of their true potential. The use of culturally biased tests, especially verbal tests, is deplored. Colleges are urged to provide support to Spanish-Americans in terms of orientation, financing, tutorial, compensatory, remedial, counseling and other programs. A list of recommendations to enhance the quality of education for Spanish-Americans is provided. (KS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED132443

David Ballesteros
American Personnel & Guidance Association
New Orleans, Louisiana
March 24, 1970

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Counseling Needs of Spanish Speaking Americans

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you some of the problems and assets of the Spanish-speaking student. Like Professor Raquel Montenegro I will not attempt in this paper to break down the counseling areas, such as vocational, social, family, but to give you a picture of the total individual. Also, references made of the Mexican Americans can apply to other Hispanic American groups. Understanding the individual and gaining insight into his learning and behavioral patterns are prerequisite to any effective guidance program. In general, for the Spanish-speaking student there has been a lack of both insight and understanding. In the next ten years there will be an increasingly number of Spanish-speaking students in our high schools and colleges. Due to this increased enrollment, demands will undoubtedly augment. Evidence of this has already occured in the first months of this decade by school boycotts in Abilene, Crystal City, Los Angeles, San Antonio, Denver, Lansing. These students are challenging us to meet their needs. It is time to focus on the problems of the present; mañana may be too late.

Who is the Cuban, the Puerto Rican, the Mexican American? He is that unique individual who has suffered from cultural isolation, language rejection, economic and educational inequalities, but who has now begun to take those instruments of oppression and turn them into instruments of change. The Mexican American youth movement--UMAS, MASO, MECHA, MAYA, MAYO--which has raised so eloquently the cry, Ya Basta! (Enough), has focused its efforts on destroying the belief that the bilingual-bicultural person is "disadvantaged." The participants are striking at the long-held debilitating syndrome that the school can educate only those whose mold fits the curriculum. They are saying that if that is the extent of the school's capacity then truly the school is a

CG 005 560

BEST COPY AVAILABLE
HARD COPY NOT AVAILABLE

"disadvantaged" institution. This sweeping movement must be credited to the patience and perseverance of our Chicano youth--cultural qualities that for so many years were termed "passivity." These students activist represent a real challenge, educationally, by questioning the foundations of the society. They are looking for ways to be helpful, pushing for a way for their actions to have some influence, pressing for more meaningful lives. The movement is a very positive thing, because it can only be compared with the apathy of an earlier time. A school may grant more freedom to students and very well open itself to responsible adolescent judgments.

The time has come for all of us to squarely face the issue we have avoided or skirted too long. The real problem in our society today--and therefore the real problem in education today is not the "Negro Problem" nor the "Mexican American Problem," nor the "Cuban Problem" nor the "Puerto Rican Problem"--it is the "Anglo Point-of-View Problem." This point-of-view determines what happens in the school--what emphasis will be given or denied racial, cultural and language values. It is this point-of-view that through educational activities, social relations in the school, and through the subtle, but devastating actions of education personnel, tell students that they are not beautiful because they are different.

Mexican American and Puerto Rican children can and will do well scholastically, but only in schools, including colleges, that not only emphasize the Anglo American way of life, but also foster pride in the Mexican American, the Puerto Rican, and other Spanish-speaking Americans, for their origin, history, culture, and bilingual background.

Bilingual and bicultural education in our schools--at all levels--can become a reality in the '70s. The 1968 Bilingual Education Act is a moral and legal commitment by our nation to the recognition of language and cultural diversity. I see it as a tool to be used parents and students to force educators,

especially, to search their consciences for the answer to the question: Is only a monolingual, monocultural society acceptable in America?

We must consider a bilingual-bicultural background an asset, not a liability. There is an advantage of being able to operate in two cultures rather than in one. In this manner, one can select the best of both cultures without having to reject one or the other. The need for recognizing the bilingual student as a positive force in our society is beyond question. It is rather paradoxical that in the Southwest some schools have forbidden students to speak Spanish. At the same time we give lip service to the wisdom of learning foreign languages, and millions of dollars are spent supporting programs that aim at teaching a foreign language to monolingual English-speaking students in our high schools and colleges, and Spanish is one of the more popular electives. Certainly few, if any schools, until recently considered as one of its responsibilities the preparation of its constituents to live in a multi-lingual and cultural society. An immediate outgrowth of this attitude has been the massive movement in both colleges and high schools for ethnic and racial studies programs during the past two years.

Counseling and guidance for the Spanish-speaking student should include cultural counseling and cultural encouragement. The Hispano cannot become an Anglo even if he desires. To enable him to survive in our monolingual-monocultural society he must be able to put into that society an extra ingredient that marks him as a person with a valuable asset to be used for the enrichment of the total society. This emphasis on cultural counseling imposes upon the counselor the responsibility to recognize those values that the Spanish-speaking American considers most important.

I would like to quote from two different sources which reveal the deep feeling of pride, dignity and concern so important among the Mexican Americans,

not because it is good or true, but because these feeling exist, especially among our youth who fight for self-identity and a positive image recognition.

> "Who am I?" asks a young Mexican American high school student. "I am a product of you and my ancestors. We came to California long before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. We settled California, the Southwestern part of the United States including the States of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Texas. We built the missions, we cultivated the ranches. We were at the Alamo in Texas, both inside and outside. You know we owned California--that is, until gold was found here. Who am I? I'm a human being. I have the same hope that you do, the same fears, the same drives, same desires, same concerns, same abilities; and I want the same chance that you have to be an individual. Who am I? In reality I am who you want me to be."

This same concern for dignity and respect is found in the poetry of Alberto Alurista:

> Mis ojos hinchados
> flooded with lagrimas
> de bronce
> melting on the cheek bones
> of my concern
> razgos indígenos
> and the scars of history on my face
> and the veins of my body
> that aches
> vomito sangre
> y lloro libertad
> I do not ask for freedom
> I am freedom

For the long range goals of Mexican American achievement, educators must recognize that the problem of education for Mexican American students is not simply one language, but rather one of role acceptance, identification, self-concept, and social values. The school counselor can make significant contributions to the Chicano student's search for self and the development of his true potential.

A stereotype by the majority culture can become a tremendously damaging element for the Mexican American, since the perpetuated stereotype often becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. There is additionally the danger that the student himself will come to believe the stereotype and begin to act the assigned role, thus fulfilling his part of the self-fulfilling prophesy. It is

easy to see how a teacher or counselor who believes a Mexican American student to be a poor scholar will soon have the student behaving accordingly.

Cultural genocide occurs very early in the lives of the Spanish-speaking student. Placement in an Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) class is tantamount to a life sentence of illiteracy and public dependency. The stigma that attaches from such placement cause ridicule from other children and produces a profound sense of inferiority and shame in the child. We must look into other factors beyond mental ability that might produce a low test result. Poverty is not measured by IQ tests. The hunger quotient is not registered, nor is the psychological effect of poor clothing, disease, and illness computed in the surveys of the lack of motivation educational achievement, and rates of drop-out. It is, therefore, a paramount importance that no child be placed in an EMR class unless it is clear beyond reasonable doubt that he suffers from an impairment of ability to learn.

It is estimated that 40% of the children in classes for the retarded in California have a Spanish surname, although the Spanish surnamed population is less than 15%. Until we find better means of measuring the potential of students, there should be a moratorium on testing for the non-English and limited-English speaking students. Unfair tests have been perpetuated by publishing companies, teacher-training instututions and test selection committees. Publishers have a moral and professional commitment to change these tests; otherwise, a warning should be placed in front of each test indicating that the test is not valid for the non-native English-speaking student and might be detrimental to his health and welfare.

There are now being conducted investigations of Spanish-speaking pupils classified as educable mentally retarded. In California, the investigations have been placed in EMR classes or whether a language barrier prevented them from being assessed properly as to their native abilities to perform cognitive

tasks. The investigations have revealed that when these pupils are given the opportunity to perform in the language with which they are most familiar--usually Spanish--their performance in many cases is above the cut-off level of the educable mentally retarded category. The students can be retested with a degree of accuracy through the use of bilingual experts and through the formulation and use of individual tests, groups tests, and diagnostic tests that reflect the background of the Spanish-speaking student.

Tests conducted by the California State Department of Education in Wasco, in 1968 showed that Mexican American children scored considerably higher than the middle-class normative population in social ability and adjustment. Major examples of culture values cited by the report as the cause of this finding were emphasis on 1) self-care of children at an early age, 2) care of younger siblings, 3) significant housework assignments, 4) helping to earn income, and 5) sharing in adult decision-making. These skills are not measured by IQ tests and are not reflected in overall scores.

Spanish-speaking students generally score low on verbal IQ tests, including the so-called "culture free" tests. They fair much better on non-verbal IQ tests. Thus, both verbal and performance type tests should be used when evaluating bilingual students. The low scores by Spanish American children in verbal tests would seem to have direct implication for school testing and guidance programs. Past performance or previous grades are a better predictor of success among these students than any standarized measure. A mere translation of a verbal IQ test into Spanish may not solve the problem. Even if administered in Spanish, it may be culturally loaded. In the translation of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Escala de Inteligencia Wechsler para Niños), you find examples like these: ¿Dónde está Chile? (Where is Chile?). For the Mexican American child, allowable answers should include, "in a can," "in a field," in a store;" otherwise, the question should be eliminated, as Chile in their vocabulary is not

normally associated with a country. Instead of "What is the color of rubies?" why not, "What is the color of plums?" A very difficult question for a child whose parents have never had a bank account is "Why is it better to pay bills by check than by cash?"

Tests play a very important role in the exclusion of Spanish-speaking Americans into colleges and universities. Many of our students are denied admission because they do not meet a necessary test score. Institutions of higher leaning must stop confusing admission standards with academic and graduation standards. Colleges and universities should modify admission policies to admit Spanish-speaking youth who may not meet formal admission "standards" but who show the necessary potential and motivation to do the work. Once admitted, these students should be given all the support they need in terms of orientation, financial, tutorial, compensatory, remedial, counseling and other programs to see them through the entire four - or, if need be, five or even six years of college. Counseling must be directed toward easing the personal conflicts the Spanish American student faces in his new college environment where there is a challenge to him to abandon his cultural ties and to adopt a culture which has not in the past been supportive of his bicultural values. The Division of Student Special Services in the Bureau of Higher Education, U.S. Office of Education, has been set up to help institutions of higher learning to provide special supportive services - tutoring, counseling, and the like, to see that students, once admitted, have a fighting chance to complete their studies.

If a college/university is to serve the community, state region, certainly, its student enrollment should reflect the ethnic composition of that community, state, region. Quality must come more and more to mean the ability to the colleges and universities to offer genuine learning experiences to different kinds of students, including the "disadvantaged," and ability must be interpreted in terms that reflect an understanding of the fact that evidence of poor preparation

does not necessarily mean innate incapacity.

Mexican Americans as a group are poorly represented in colleges and universities. In 1966, a survey by the California State Department of Education, through its Bureau of Intergroup Relations, disclosed that more than 14% of the public school enrollment was Spanish surname - yet less than 1% of the student enrollment of the seven university campuses was Spanish surnamed. In Texas, where the Mexican American population of the state approaches the 20% mark, in the school year 1969-70, less than 2% of the student population at the University of Texas-Austin, is Mexican American. Neither Texas nor California where 80% of the Mexican American population in the Southwest resides has a state operated teacher-training institution that requires a potential counselor to take Spanish language instruction, or sociology of the Spanish-speaking community. Spanish-speaking students do not have the advantage of several score of special schools like the Negro college to favor them. There is not a single Mexican American institution, not even a college within a university that caters solely to the needs of La Raza.

As a group, the Mexican American student is out of the running for scholarships because he must compete with the best. There are no million dollar foundations to help him. Of course, if he is denied admission, he misses out in government and private subsidies, whether in loan or scholarship monies or in discount of tuition rates that all students in state supported institutions receive. Through the National Defense Student Loan Program, College Work Study Education Opportunity Grants, Guarantee Loan Program, in Fiscal Year 1968 Spanish surname students accounted for only 2.6% of the total number of students receiving college aid. It would be wise if work study monies could provide for these students an opportunity to serve as counselor aides, with personnel at the various educational levels. These would encourage the students to pursue a counseling and guidance career and thus alleviate the shortage of Spanish-speaking counselors.

Chicano student organizations are working closely with scholarships, counseling and tutorial programs, seeking out potential college students, disseminating information. They have been catalysts, pressure groups that are bringing about change. The UMAS (United Mexican American Students) group at the University of Colorado sold the scholarship idea to the University of Colorado Student Council who passed a resolution in the Spring of 1969 so that each semester students assess themselves $5. extra to finance scholarships and tutorial services for Mexican Americans and other minority students that need assistance.

I would like to summarize by listing and commenting on certain points that I feel are germane to a sound counseling and guidance program for Spanish-speaking Americans.. Some of these recommendations have been made by high school and college students in their demands for quality education:

1. Hire and prepare counselors who understand the bilingual-bicultural student.
2. Provide cultural awareness for the school staff.
3. Encourage the student; make him feel proud of what he is.
4. Make bilingual and ethnic studies programs available to both Anglo and Spanish American Students.
5. Inform students about diverse job possibilities and professions--not all Spanish surnamed persons make good mechanics.
6. Invite potential college students to visit your campus; this would provide information to the student and lessen the fear of enrollment.
7. Establish scholarships; free tuition and books are not enough.
8. Reassess standards--they do not have to be lowered. Most standards were made for middle-class Anglo America.
9. Review the cases of Spanish surname pupils currently enrolled in mentally retarded classes; many are retarded only between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
10. Work closely with curriculum personnel on matters of course offerings and content and test evaluations.
11. Seek research funds to make studies on personal characteristics of Spanish-speaking students, particularly their attitudes, values and feelings toward teachers, subjects, parents, Anglo students and each other.

12. Provide services to the community; articulate with parents--unless parents and school personnel become aware of each other's values and respect these values, conflicts will continue, with the student suffering the consequences.

13. Make available in Spanish information booklets and other parental correspondence.

14. Offer adult educational programs for parents of students.

15. Listen to the student; he might have something to tell you.

Finally, I would like to stress the necessity in support of guidance and counseling services that will take the whole student along with the needs and understanding of his family and community. We must take a positive approach to see that programs are designed to make students succeed, not fail, that programs include students, not exclude. I am hoping that very soon we will begin talking about the Spanish-speaking student as an advantaged student because of his bilingual-bicultural background. If we are to meet the challenge of the future both at home and abroad, certainly, the only disadvantaged, will be the monolingual-monocultural student. Gracias.